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ABSTRACT

Magazine journalism is not dead, despite the demise of many giant publications, but is thriving in new forms on the threshold of a new era whose trademark is urbanism. New publications recently appearing are primarily special audience magazines designed to fill the specific information needs of new groupings of readers. Since most of these new magazines survive on circulation revenue more than on advertising costs, they are able to exercise greater editorial freedom and wider content selection. Also, the new periodicals appeal to the advertisers since they offer a "pre-screened," selected audience. (Bibliographical data is provided and statistical tables show that new magazines reflect social changes and that Black publications have increased in number.) (DS)

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URBANIZATION, SPECIALIZATION AND THE FUTURE OF MAGAZINES

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The publicized demise of well-known mass circulation magazines like Life, Look, Saturday Evening Post and Colliers may be misleading as an index of the journalistic health of magazines for writers, teachers, publishers and the general public. The decline of such massive giants is matched by a concurrent increase and upsurge in the number and circulation of special audience publications, indicating that magazine journalism is not dead, but is thriving in new forms on the threshold of a new era whose trademark is urbanism.

The matrix of urbanization includes a high degree of fragmentation and segregation of primary groups and secondary groups (such as age, sex and occupation); an increasing reliance on media symbols; greater priorities on the role of objective, scientific surveillance and control in the technological arena; more mobility (physical changes in scale and speed and social status); and counter-reactive forces to re-integrate and generalize about the human condition to lessen specialization (the ecology movement), return to nature (anti-urbanism and nostalgia)--all of which are being reflected in the magazine world.

While the mass media struggle like dinosaurs to survive, magazines come and go in response to social changes. They gain reader commitment or go out of business. They personalize their content and their editors are often involved in

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the real world as newsmakers, personalities and social activists (Hugh Hefner, Gloria Steinem, Norman Cousins). They link reader and advertiser and vice versa. They bring reader responsibility via his willingness to pay for the product directly in subscriptions or the newstand. Much of this does not hold true for the mass media, which may be more stable, but more resistant to changes.

In the 1960s, with the dissent, revolt, turmoil and dissatisfaction with mass society, the friction, challenge within the mass created a seedbed for the growth of specialized publications at the expense of generalized media. While it is true that mass magazines dies, postal rates have increased, and competition is still great from television, during 1972 alone, the Magazine Publishers Association reported 106 new magazines with only 30 suspensions. Since 1962, there were 818 new magazines started and 180 suspended, and the projected circulation for the 106 new publications in 1972 was 27,468,000 copies per issue.[1] The 1970s, with its return to localism as a federal policy and the disenchantment with massive national goals, is likely to further encourage special audiences.

Magazines "are serving their readers more satisfactorily and getting more money from them; they spring up overnight to fill the informational needs of new groupings of readers who develop new life-styles, hobbies and vocations".[2] As magazines get more revenue from circulation sales, they rely less on advertising sales and in their independence can serve readers and be more seledtive in editorial content, which aids magazine strength and influence. "The selectivity of editorial content helps to attract those readers who are keenly interested and more willing to pay their share of the cost. This tightly-knit band of readers constitutes a marketplace that advertisers seek because it maximizes the potential sale of their products as it minimizes waste circulation and diluted reader interest. For this kind of an audience/marketplace, advertisers can afford to use informative service copy as well as persuasive words and graphics. The publisher's ability to provide regional editions and research on

the kind of readers he has further enhances the advertiser's opportunity for productive copy".[3]

As magazines are more responsive to indivuality, they decline as a mass medium. Television became urban America's mass medium and destroyed the appeal of magazines to advertisers seeking a generalized audience. Saturday Evening Post, with its rural readership and rural image, folded as it realized magazines had a future with specialized audiences. Thus, Playboy, "aimed at young, urban males" and New Yorker for "urbane, sophisticated, strictly Eastern" readers, both thrived as "the specialized magazine is a perfect vehicle for advertising. It offers advertisers a chance at a hand-picked audience".[4]

The increase of magazines in the past decade reflected that intense period of social change and ferment especially marked in the latter part of the 1960s.[5] The peak was hit in 1967-69 and began somewhat of a decline and leveling off in 1971. (See TABLE 1) Cultural and racial minority magazines grew in the decade with 23 new ones registered in one study for the period of 1960-71, more than in the study period of 1880-1960 for Black magazines, which peaked near the end of the 1960s.[6] (See TABLE 2)

While it is true that the highly successful Black magazine Ebony remained somewhat conservative on the racial movement of the 1960s, and its advertising did not identify with the new Black militancy,[7] its stability was due to its racial specialization, which, in retrospect, was responsive to the Black condition, which by 1972 was one of "benign neglect", more segregation in cities, and the demise of the racial integration movement led by the late Rev. Martin Luther King. By 1973, Ebony had launched Ebony Jr., the first all-Black magazine for children ages 6-12, not for whites or generalized, interracial readers. Publisher John Johnson took note of the failure of Look and Life trying to be general magazines, and noted that the Black children would know it was "their" magazine. "We are moving in a crisis of identity. Everyone wants to identify with his own. That's

why you can no longer put out a mass magazine that is successful."[8] Ebony's experience and success is a testimony on the response of magazines to the urban social condition.

Some indication of the relationship of magazines to urbanization may be gleaned from a telescopic look at categories and titles of comprehensive listings of magazines, and related circulation and advertising data. Take the top 10 circulation magazines of 1972:

	Total Circulation*
Readers Digest	17,827,661
TV Guide	16,410,858
Woman's Day	8,191,731
Better Homes and Gardens	7,996,050
Family Circle	7,889,587
McCall's	7,516,960
National Geographic	7,260,179
Ladies Home Journal	7,014,251
Playboy	6,400,573
Good Housekeeping	5,801,446

*1972 Consumer Magazine and Farm Publication Rates and Data, SRDS

Note that six of the 10 are women-oriented, and if the argument is made that such reflects the family and other primary groups, it may also be noted that such "home" magazines are designed primarily to "increase consumer appetites for the goods displayed".[9] The remainder of the top 10 reflect media (TV Guide); the non-urban, natural world (National Geographic); the new urban morality (Playboy); and the digested anthology for mobilized, rapid urban society(Readers Digest).

An examination of the leading magazine advertisers (total dollar expenditures) in 1971 as reported in "Rediscovering Magazines" by the Magazine Publishers Assn., all but two of the top 10 deal with social status and mobility or some combination. They include automobiles (GM and Ford); cigarettes (Philip Morris, R.J. Reynolds, Britain-American Tobacco Co. Ltd.); liquor (Distillers Corporation, Seagrams Ltd.); and soap (Bristol-Myers). Two general advertisers, General Foods and Sears rank 10th and 7th respectively.

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Although a study shows that cigarette advertising was up in magazines after it was taken off TV, the greatest increase was in women's magazines (feminists liberated into urban culture); and the least increase was in Ebony (Blacks still undigested in urban society). Cigarettes have long been a symbol of urban sophistication as well as an outlet for urban tension and expression of status.

In the 1972 Ayers Directory and Statistical Rate and Data Service of SRD report on magazines with more than a million circulation, the magazines can be grouped as follows, with some examples selected as typical:

Rural-naturalistic escapism N=20
(Field and Stream, Scouting, Outdoor Life, True, Progressive Farmer, Penthouse)

Specialization and Segregation N=16
(Baby Talk, Boy's Life, Seventeen, Tuesday, Ebony, Elks, American Legion)

Media magazines N=14
(TV Guide, Photoplay, TV Radio-Mirror, Motion Pix, New York Times Book Review)

Surveillance and Control N=5
(Consumer Reports, Changing Times)

Integrative Magazines N=6
(American Home, Family Circle, Family Weekly)

The 1972 consumer magazine classification by Standard Rate and Data also reflects similar divisions with a breakdown of topics rather than titles:

Specialization and Segregation(esp. by age and occupation) 21
--babies, brides, senior citizens, fraternities, labor unions, youth

Media Magazines 19
--TV and radio and movie guides, almanacs and directories, music, records

Mobility and Transit 8
--airlines, automotive, travel

Surveillance and Control 7
--detective, science fiction, health

Status 6
--arts and antiques, hobbies, epicurean

Naturalistic, rural, anti-urban 6
--nature and ecology, fishing & hunting, horses and pets, gardening, adventure

Integrative 4
--home, society, metropolitan

Some further indication of the segmentation revealed in magazines is indicated by the growth in regional advertising in magazines as reported by the Publishers Information Bureau. In the period 1959-71, the total revenue % increased from $42,629,531 (5.4%) to $222,722,985 (17.8%) in 1971. Another thermometer is revealed in the types of new magazines started in the 1964-66 three-year period as reported by the advertising bureau of the Magazine Publishers Assn. The breakdown induced from titles shows that media-type magazines had 32; surveillance and control 26; money, jobs and business 20; status, fashion, clothes 14; food 9; specialization and segregation by age and job 9; and at the bottom the integrative publications like city and state magazines 7; and home and family (7). Of the total, 20 did not group themselves into any separate category, and 14 fell into the area of travel and mobility.

The categories suggested in this telescopic analysis are subject to question and to challenge as having overlap and lacking in exclusivity. It is even more risky to try to generalize with the more recent changes in the magazine world. So-called demographic sub-communities function as "communities of interest" in a fragmented society on a wide geographical scale as transit and communications technology make traditional boundaries of community less significant. Stamp collectors and ham radio operators communication throughout the world but often never see each other. Otherwise isolated citizens, Black children, or elementary and junior high school teachers (now with their own Learning magazine) "come together" in their own media. Symbolically, and practically, life for all becomes lifestyle for many, as not all do the same thing, but many do different things. It is fitting therefore, that as Life magazine died, Lifestyle magazine was created. Lifestyle aims at people with a $35,000 a year median income who

like high quality, expensive cars, travel and liquor, the "good times", and who were found via computer-selected names out of a data bank of 52,000,000 families. The magazine publisher, Edward Harbert II told readers in the first issue "we are subscribing to you", as the magazine skipped the ads, posters, mailings and instead built circulation by selecting a charter readership.[11] A veteran Life writer Tommy Thompson said that magazine died because "We lost our focus. We didn't know who we were writing to. We continued to try to put out a mass magazine when America was not 'mass' anymore, but divergent groups of specialized interests".[12]

Although many reasons have been cited for the demise of Life (postal rates, TV competition, bad management and staff inbreeding etc.), the decline of New York as the urban capital of publishing is suggested. Life's death is "further evidence of the decline of New York City as the heart and head of the publishing industry. Though Life and Look, creatures of the Manhattan Publishing jungle, couldn't make it, some new magazines have. What they have in common is a much more specialized audience. Some, like Playboy (Chicago) and Psychology Today (San Francisco) have offices far from the old jungle."[13]

The triteness of the rise in specialized magazines[14] may be given further meaning and freshness by an urban interpretation of some of the new magazine de-developments in the area of sex, nostalgia and the media. Perhaps the most successful magazine of the past decade has been Playboy with its new urban and leisure morality. With the loss of feeling and other ties, sex becomes the last communication, the remaining common denominator about which alienated individuals can feel and participate with meaning.[15] As an integrative media, the skin magazines have flourished and may fill the vacuum left by the recent court ruling on pornography.

Women have had their traditional sexual role expressed in the "women's magazines" until the emergence of Ms, which like Playboy, has had imitators seeking to sell sexual liberation. An array of journals, quarterlies, newsletters and newspapers have blossomed (Up, Off Our Back, Women etc.) as MS has moved women's

role light years from how to feed farm-hands to how to control their own lives.[16] Other new magazines perhaps reflecting sexual alienation and integration as a focus of modern society are Tomorrow, for divorcees and widows; Singles, a magazine for the 43 million un-married Americans; Couples, on how two people can stay together; and True to Life, a sexual handbook on "how to" deal with sexual problems such as VD and abortion not otherwise solved by information from the old primary groups of family and school.

New magazines have not only come to the rescue of those left isolated by the breakdown of primary groups, but they assure those longing for the rural past that it can be found despite urban frustration. Saturday Evening Post was resurrected in 1971 as a quarterly, is now published 6 times a year, plans nine in 1974 and 12 in 1975, as it directs its appeal to the heartland and Middle America with the editorial flavor of the 1930s.[17] Other nostalgic yearnings of urban America now find expression in country and western music flooding New York and Chicago, and now a new Country Music magazine.[18] Those escaping to the campus community with its youth ghetto and pockets of puberty can find the "little magazines", their authors, presses, bookstores and readers.[19] Older readers can wallow in the Police Gazette, whose 1880-1890 reprints are now in book form as what has been called a "Blue Collar Playboy", and for those who still believe the West is safe from urbanization, there is the idealized portrait of the West in the old and successful Sunset magazine, whose 62 staffers at least are required to practice and do what they write about on "how to do" service for readers.[20]

The increasing magazine coverage of media itself is perhaps the ultimate[21] is specialization. Not only news of editors, writers and magazines, but coverage of other media such as TV, where TV Guide is now the leading advertising revenue magazine and ironically tells about TV which took so many ads away from Life, Look, and the Post. Such poetic justice is enlarged by the distribution of TV Guide

largely in supermarkets and its plan for a new magazine----Good Food![22]

Another new development on magazines about media is the publication of Tube Talk, a magazine being distributed as a newspaper supplement in suburbs with high socio-economic levels which appeal to advertisers and where pre-teens are being sought as readers.[23] There is evidence that the time given to media is a function of demographics and life-style and that the higher the education, the greater the magazine readership time and the less time spent on newspapers, radio and TV.[24] Also, there is a new magazine about magazines called Folio, a monthly for magazine management; and an all-ad magazine called Shopper's Voice provides questionnaires alongside advertised products to induce reader involvement.[25]

As physical distance means less in the Space Age and the jet set, many groups have remained isolated and separated save for the magazine media. This was true for the urban minority underground press of the 1960s, new Black publications, and now for Indians, Appalachians, and Puerto Ricans who are generating their own student magazines in ghettoes, reservations and mountain pockets. Many of these periodicals grew out of the Institutional Development and Economic Affairs Inc. (IDEAS) and the Foxfire quarterly, named for an eerie phosphorescent light in decayed wood and symbolizing a means for youth to hear about minority culture through magazines.[26]

The speed of urbanization requires more and more condensation and data digest and the convenient anthology of the news magazines and Readers Digest has been followed by the success of Intellectual Digest and Psychology Today, and more recently a new news magazine written by famous by-lined authors in New York City called New Times and heralded as the first new news magazine in 40 years.

The need to adjust to urban society and its complexity is often no less for media as for man. Central city dailies fight to win reader approval and involvement with "action lines", "op-pages", and more "letters to editors" printed, while "journalism review" magazines grow, often with the help of the city desk.

Travel and tourism magazines find themselves adjusting to gas shortages and over-crowded parks and ecological damage which needs surveillance, and controls on urban influx. The "bible of rock" and music sheet of the counter culture, the Rolling Stone finds itself moving from that fractured isolation and the drug undoing to the re-integrative metamorphosis of the general interest, serious general reporting publication.[27] The striving Christian Century faces rising costs and drops in circulation but seeks to hold on to liberalism and pacifism,[28] and the in-house struggles of Harper's, Atlantic and the more recent troubles at Saturday Review reveal that magazine media cannot hide behind the monopolistic advertising guaranteed by central city business districts to central city dailies and TV stations. They must respond and they do, and that response, even in magazine mortality, is a positive aspect of magazines in society.

Some clue as to the limits that specialization may go without defeat is indicated in the demise of the "new" Saturday Review and its new merger with World. The "old" Saturday Review, under Norman Cousins, was tied to his reflection and ideas on the world upon which they were placed. His successors instead sought out marketing techniques, gaudy graphics, flamboyant promotional schemes, and lavish and colorful campaigns for four monthlies on science, arts, society and education. The new effort went bankrupt in short time and Cousins reclaimed the shipwreck with some vincication. Critics said the new magazine was "too general for specialists and too specialized for general interest readers."[29] Cousins thought the new SR lacked identity and was was so popularized that it "simply didn't fit the intellectual needs of the country, which are integration of knowledge, not fragmentation of knowledge."[30] Another explanation was that the move of SR "from New York, a critical city, to San Francisco, pretty but dumb, added to the delusional air surrounding the enterprise."[31]

Magazine audiences are good watchdogs and they make sure their publications serve them. Magazines like Ladies Home Journal and Better Homes and Gardens

experienced the Meredith publication formula for "service to readers" and one observer of that practice suggests that "To survive, magazines must serve--they must pick out a particular audience and direct their talents and attention to the needs and desires of that audience. Magazines that flounder, that scatter shot at the multiple needs of complex audiences are indanger of spreading themselves too thin. Contemporary periodicals that get caught in the disease of universality can easily fall because reader confidence, reader interest in them can disintegrate and advertising dry up when knowledge of lessening of reader interest is felt."[32] "Today's new magazines more than ever appeal to a community of readers rather than merely to readers in a community, audiences defined demographically rather than geographically."[33]

There are serious social implications for this possible decline in societal unity and cohesion, but for journalism teachers and researchers, it has serious ramifications for teaching and training for the future. Several questions of direction and emphasis arise: Should emphasis be on teaching subjects or techniques Should magazine teaching be integrated internally and severed from being an appendage of the "news-editorial" and "feature writing" portions of newspapers ? Should this internal integration face up to the external separation of subject and geography and the problems of regional and topical specialization. (Time has a college, doctor's and education issue; and Better Homes and Gardens has special departments with editors on furniture, food, gardening and landscaping, travel, sewing, health, entertainment, kitchens, and buildings.

Training should encourage adequate coverage of media; develop a new concept of community; decide on when mass and special knowledge and techniques apply; and develop magazine sequences which deserve the name and accreditation seal.

Although future magazines face the technology of microfilm, video cassettes, and the computer, the form may change, but the function and concept of the magazine will probably survive in the age of electronics.[34]

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TABLE 1
NEW MAGAZINES REFLECT SOCIAL CHANGES
1962-1972
* Magazine Publishers Association

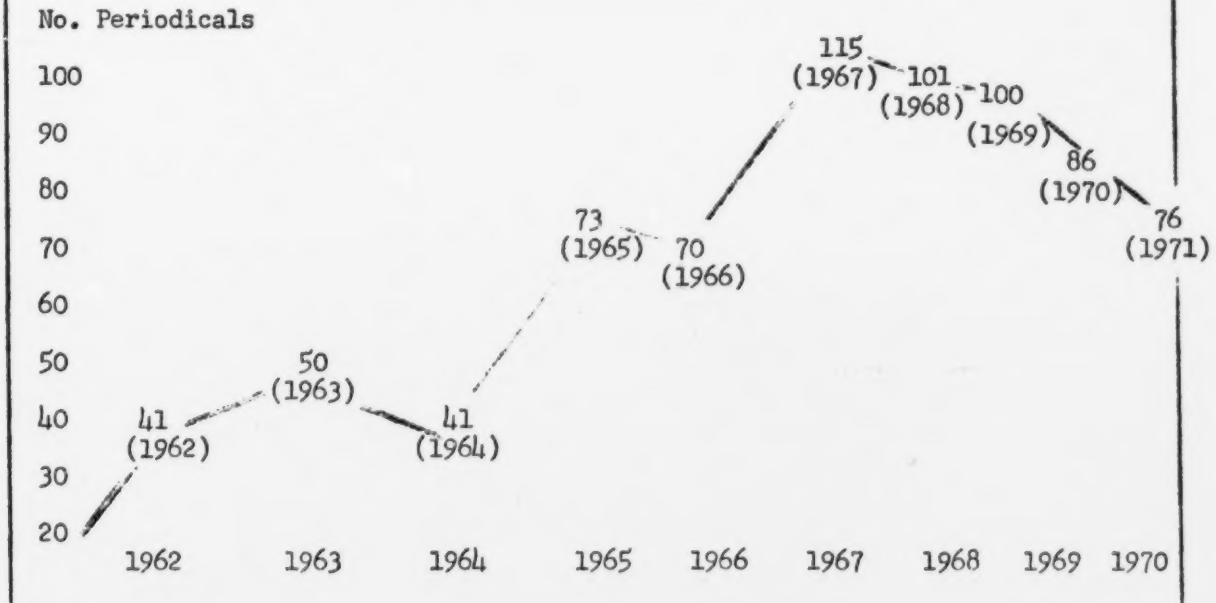
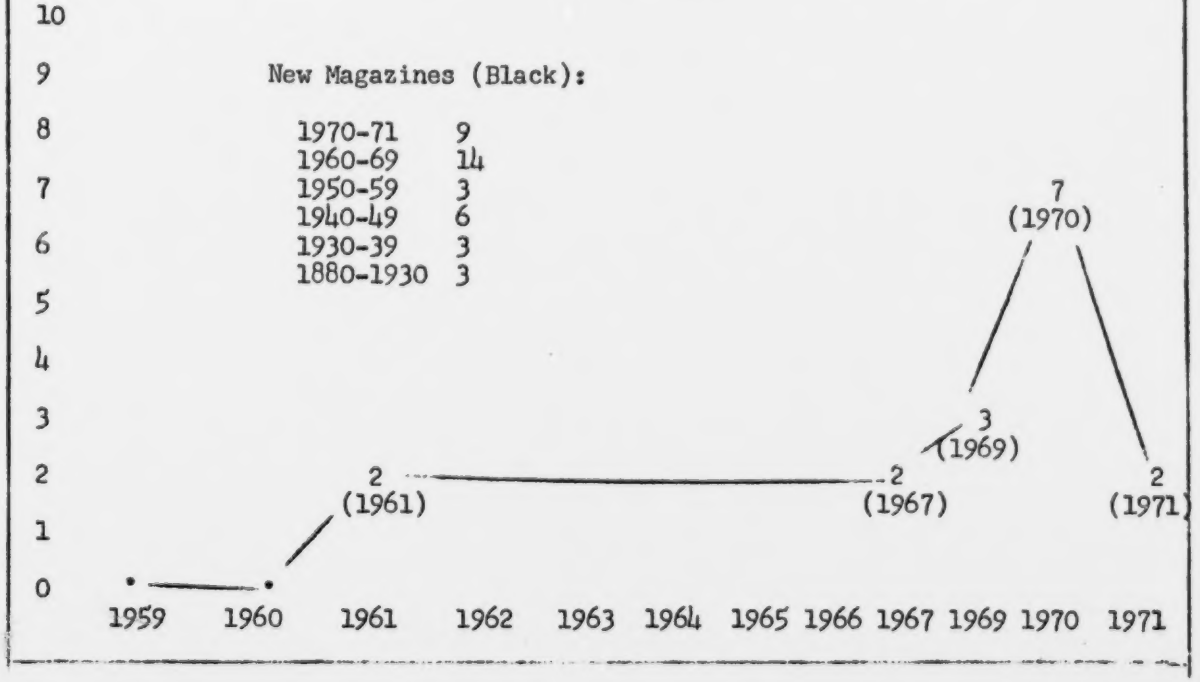


TABLE 2
NEW BLACK MAGAZINES: 1960-71
(See Footnote 6-Kimbrough)



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footnotes-continued

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